



PRESS RELEASE

United States Clears Unexploded Ordnance to Help Speed Relief Aid to Sudan's Rumbek Region

Washington D.C., 29 October 2004 --The U.S. Department of State's Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement, working through its RONCO Consulting Corporation contractor, successfully completed a battlefield area clearance project by the vital dirt airstrip at Rumbek in southern Sudan. This will enable the United Nations' World Food Program (WFP) to safely improve the runway making it available to large transport aircraft, significantly increasing the volume of relief supplies provided to meet the needs of Sudanese civilians.

Rumbek is an important transit point for food, medicine and other critical items en route to needy populations in southern Sudan. Up to now, only small single and twin-engine aircraft could land at Rumbek. With the completion of the battlefield area clearance, WFP will be able to expand the airstrip so that larger aircraft such as C-130 transports can deliver greater amounts of aid.

The World Food Program is expected to begin runway and apron improvements soon.

Photos depicting the Rumbek airstrip in its present state immediately following completion of the battlefield area clearance project may be viewed online at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/pix/b/37518.htm>.

In 2002, the U.S. Department of State facilitated the safe return of displaced Sudanese to the Nuba Mountain region in Sudan by deploying its Quick Reaction Demining Force to clear landmines and unexploded ordnance there.

The Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs provides humanitarian mine action assistance and support for small arms/light weapons mitigation worldwide. To learn more, visit www.state.gov/t/pm/wra.

The following images depict the small, unpaved airstrip at Rumbek, Sudan, immediately after the clearance of unexploded ordnance around it, in a project supported by the U.S. Department of State's Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs. Presently, the airstrip can handle only small aircraft that are unable to bring in adequate amounts of food and other desperately needed relief aid to Sudanese affected by fighting in the southern part of the country. Now that the unexploded ordnance has been cleared, the United Nations World Food Program will be able to safely improve the runway, thereby enabling much larger transport aircraft such as the C-130 Hercules, to deliver far greater amounts of aid to the region.

----- Visit the US Embassy Website at <http://usembassy.state.gov/nairobi> -----

A wrecked twin-engine Royal New Zealand Air Force Andover aircraft at the Rumbek airstrip that suffered catastrophic engine failure after delivering relief supplies.



The area immediately at the north end of the runway, now safe from the humanitarian impact of unexploded ordnance, which will be leveled and prepared for the lengthening and widening of the runway.



The flight operations center at Lokichokio Airport in Kenya, from where relief flights to Rumbek originate.



United Nations World Food Program C-130 Hercules transports parked at Lokichokio Airport. After the World Food Program improves the Rumbek airstrip now that it has been cleared of unexploded ordnance, these heavy aircraft will be able to dramatically increase the amount of food, medicine, clothing and shelter needed in the Rumbek region of southern Sudan.

